The Comanches

276 Comanche pipes were made of bone, stone, or wood by both men and women. Many of the early pipes were straight tubes made of bone from the shank of a deer or an antelope, cut off at either end, the marrow punched out, and the mouth end pared down and smoothed. Before being used, such a pipe was commonly wrapped with the ligament from the back of a buffalo bull's neck, and this, when dried, made so complete a reinforcement of the bone that the pipe might last a long time. The straight bone pipes were easier to carry than the more bulky and elaborate stemmed pipes, and were therefore taken on expeditions. They were both long and short, and [171] were called *ɔ'mɔɔɔy*. Such pipes were also used by the Kiowas and Cheyennes.[4]

276 According to white captives, the stone pipe was most commonly used in later times. Stone pipes were made of soft stone, either white 324 soapstone or red sandstone. Soapstone is easy to fashion, is found in various sections of the Comanche country, and answers as well as clay or meerschaum. The Comanche stone pipe bowl was made with a vertical cylinder on a flat base that projected forward and back from the bowl. This spur beyond the bowl allowed the smoker to grip the bowl without burning his hands. He had to use a two-handed grip to keep the bowl from falling off the stem, since the two parts of the pipe were not fastened together. Soapstone bowls were usually dyed red or black with a preparation concocted of poke berry and grease or walnut juice. Hard wood was sometimes substituted for stone. Pipes were often artistically engraved and designed, particularly those intended for ceremonial use.

411 The manufacturing of weapons and equipment for war and the [462] hunt belonged primarily to the category of man's work. Perhaps the most important article was the bow and arrow. The Comanches made excellent bows, which they used with great skill. A good bow required a long time and much care and labor in construction. The [463] experts were usually the old men who could no longer go to war. According to informants, they had no organization or "guild." The [435] customary present or fee given for an ordinary wooden bow was one horse.[5]

[4] Informant: Post Oak Jim: see also Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, I, 208.
[5] Informant: Kills Something.

411 was held in place with glue and firmly wrapped with wet sinew, which in turn was glued and rubbed to a smooth finish.

411 The Comanches relied almost entirely on metal for arrow points
325 after they came in contact with the whites. Barrel hoops, bindings for boxes, even frying pans and similar pieces of metal furnished excellent material. The piece of metal was sharpened on one end and on both sides. After the point was sharpened, it was hardened by heating it in a fire and then dropping it while red hot into cold water. The Mexican traders not only supplied iron for the points but files with which to fashion and sharpen the arrowheads. Metal arrowheads became an important item of trade among most American Indian tribes.

> Hundreds of thousands were manufactured yearly by eastern traders to be exchanged for furs. They were put in packages of one dozen each, cost the trader six cents a package and were the means for obtaining enormous profits. Usually one package was exchanged for a buffalo robe.[13]

There were two general types of metal arrowheads, one for game and one for war. The game point had no barb and was easily extracted, while the war point was barbed and loosely attached to the shaft. Some war points had but one barb, which, when shot into a body and the shaft pulled, caught in the flesh, and the point turned crosswise in the wound, making it impossible to extract it without tearing or cutting.

411 Before the acquisition of metal, arrows were made of stone, bone,
● 324 or horn. Flint appears to have been the most popular, and some preferred it even after the introduction of metal. It has been claimed that wounds made by flint arrow points were more likely to be fatal than those of metal. The Comanches apparently did little grinding or polishing of flint. Indeed, the nature of much of the flint of the Comanche country rendered such treatment unnecessary. Lehmann has left an account of one method of making stone arrowheads, but whether it was Apache or Comanche is uncertain, the implication being that the method was common among both tribes.

[13] Garretson, *op. cit.*, 180.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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We threw a large flint stone, from two to six feet in circumference, into the fire. After the stone became very hot, small thin pieces would pop off; we selected those pieces which would require the least work to put into shape, and picked these pieces up with a stick split at the end; while these pieces were very hot, we dropped cold water on those places we wished to thin down; the cold water caused the spot touched to chip off, and in this way we made some of the keenest pointed and sharpest arrows that could be fashioned out of stone.[14]

All efforts of archaeologists to determine a Comanche-type flint arrow point have been in vain. In this connection Professor Mildred Pickle Mayhall says, "There are several mentions of distinctive points and shafts for different tribes but just what those differences were we do not exactly know. Poisoned arrows may have belonged to all the Texas tribes but there is little definite information about this save in reference to the Comanches."[15] The Comanches did poison their arrow points occasionally for use in war, by making an extract from a plant not known to our informants or by sticking them in a dead skunk.

The bow and arrow was exceptionally accurate up to fifty yards or more. The Comanche arrow shot from a good bow could wing a true flight for three hundred yards. It has been maintained on good authority that at a distance of from ten to fifteen yards, an arrow (twenty to thirty inches in length) could be driven completely through the carcass of a buffalo, providing it struck no bone, that an object the size of a doorknob could be hit by an expert marksman an average of four out of five shots, and that an expert Comanche hunter could kill twice the number of buffalo with bow and arrow as an American with a pistol.[16]

The superiority of bow and arrow over the old-type musket was recognized by the Comanches. When muskets first became known to them, they were all eager to obtain them. But when the novelty

[14] Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 93–94.

[15] Mildred P. Mayhall, "The Indians of Texas: the Atakapa, the Karankawa, the Tonkawa" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas Library), 608–609.

[16] Gregg, *op. cit.*, 361–63, 233; Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 296; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160.